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Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General recommends UNMOT presence be extended to 6 March on understanding efforts are made to agree on holding next round of talks; says situation in Tajikistan remains tense.

+ Efforts to halt nuclear proliferation gain greater significance with increasing number of regional and subregional conflicts, Secretary-General tells the Conference on Disarmament.

+ Secretary-General appoints new Executive Secretaries of ESCWA; ESCAP and ECA; aims to enhance effectiveness and reinforce management in United Nations economic and social sectors.

+ Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women approves working group recommendations; proposals deal with draft optional protocol on right to petition Committee directly; to meet in Geneva.

+ Department of Humanitarian Affairs launches $65 million consolidated inter-agency appeal to fund emergency humanitarian activities in Liberia during first six months of 1995.

+ Commission on Human Rights discusses right to self-determination, Israeli practices in Occupied Territories; Philippine Foreign Secretary draws attention to plight of victims of child prostitution.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the presence of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) be extended until 6 March. In a report to the Security Council dated 4 February, the Secretary-General made that recommendation on the understanding that every effort was made, during the next month, to obtain agreement on the holding of the next round of talks as soon as possible. He said the activities of UNMOT connected to the Tehran Agreement were an important stabilizing factor in the country. Although the fourth round of Tajik talks remained blocked, both the Government and the opposition were still determined to continue the political process under United Nations auspices.

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The Secretary-General said he had been able to comply only partially with the requirements of resolution 968 (1994). Both sides had agreed to extend the cease-fire beyond 6 February, although the opposition had only agreed to a one month extension. They had also stated their commitment to a continuing political process. However, the oppositions's unwillingness to accept Moscow as a venue for the next round of inter-Tajik talks made it impossible for him to report that the negotiations were being actively pursued at present. He would continue his efforts to obtain the agreement of both parties to a venue and date for the fourth round of talks.

In the meantime, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said, the situation in Tajikistan remained tense, particularly on the border with Afghanistan. The economic crisis had a serious negative impact on efforts to stabilize the political situation and to complete the repatriation of refugees.

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Efforts to stop the flow of arms and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have acquired even greater significance due to the increasing number of regional and subregional conflicts, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a message to the Conference on Disarmament meeting in Geneva last week, the Secretary-General said international cooperation in the field of disarmament had been enhanced over the last two years. He noted support at the Conference for the idea of an international convention to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and appealed to States to resolve outstanding issues. Any solution should take into account the legitimate demands of non-nuclear-weapon States for stronger international and legally binding security assurances as well as the requirement that they pledge to renounce the possession and acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General said that while the emphasis on arms reduction and disarmament in the nuclear field was legitimate, the negative impact of uncontrolled conventional arms transfers on international security should be vigorously addressed. Ongoing conflicts were being fought with conventional weapons, exacting a heavy toll and causing untold human suffering. Therefore, openness and transparency in military matters was essential to enhance confidence and trust among States, to help dissipate suspicions, and to contribute to global and regional stability. He described the Register on Conventional Arms is an important element in the collective effort to promote transparency.

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The Secretary-General has appointed Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). A United Nations spokesman said today the Secretary-General views the appointments as part of a broader effort to enhance the effectiveness and reinforce management in the economic and social sectors of the Organization. Revitalizing the regional commissions to increase their

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responsiveness to national priorities, and adapting their role and contribution to changing global and regional realities was a key element in that effort.

The Secretary-General has asked the new Commissioners to review programmes and management structures in order to eliminate duplication and reinforce collaboration with the specialized agencies and other programmes. His objective is to refocus and streamline the Commissions' work so that they will become catalysts for excellence and enhance regional cooperation and integration, the spokesman said. The Secretary-General also wants to strengthen links between the Commissions and the economic Departments and Programmes at United Nations Headquarters and to exploit regional approaches and solutions to development problems.

The new Executive Secretaries are: Dr. Hazem Abdel Aziz El-Beblawi (Egypt) who took up his appointment as Executive Secretary of ESCWA on 1 February; Dr. Adrianus Mooy (Indonesia) who will head ESCAP starting 1 April; and Mr. K. Y. Amoako (Ghana) who will take up his duties at ECA on 1 May.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has decided to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Committee took that action as it adopted its final report and ended the work of its current session in Geneva on Friday. The draft would provide for individuals and groups to petition the Committee directly about violations of women's rights, or individuals or groups who had been affected by the failure of a State Party to comply with its obligations under the Convention.

The 33-member expert Committee also decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it meet in Geneva, where it could be serviced by the Secretariat of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. It emphasized that, as women's rights had been identified by the World Conference on Human Rights as an essential component of those rights, it was appropriate for the Committee to work alongside other human rights treaty bodies located in Geneva. The Committee said it would maintain a close liaison with both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women.

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The United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) has launched a consolidated inter-agency appeal for $65.3 million to fund emergency humanitarian activities in Liberia during the first six months of 1995. Increased fighting in the last year has been disastrous for the country's civilian population. Up to 1.8 million people inside Liberia require emergency assistance, but only 1.5 million of those can be reached. According to the DHA, without immediate improvement in overall security, the nutritional status of displaced persons, both within and outside secure zones, might deteriorate further.

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Humanitarian assistance in Liberia is hindered by some of the most difficult circumstances in the conflict's five-year history. An elusive peace and the lack of credible security guarantees by the warring factions have limited most regular relief activities to areas controlled by the Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOMOG). The appeal reflects humanitarian relief which can be implemented under existing security constraints.

Agencies taking part in the appeal include: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

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The plight of victims of child prostitution from third-world countries was stressed by Roberto Romulo, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, who addressed the Commission on Human Rights as a guest speaker. "Sex criminals, among them, many pedophiles, come to our shores like vultures in the guise of tourists and sometimes also, unfortunately, in the guise of well-meaning non-governmental organizations to prey on our children", Mr Romulo said. Contracts of sex tourism organizers should be nullified; sex tourists should be dealt with through immigration authorities; and periodic checks should be carried out in tourist resorts, he added.

The Commission, meeting in Geneva, continued its debate on human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories and on the right of peoples to self-determination, hearing statements by the representatives of 10 other countries and four non-governmental organizations. Among the topics discussed were the situation in Chechnya, Jammu and Kashmir, East Timor, Tibet, and Burundi, as well as the negative impact of the policies of international financial institutions on living standards in Central America.

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